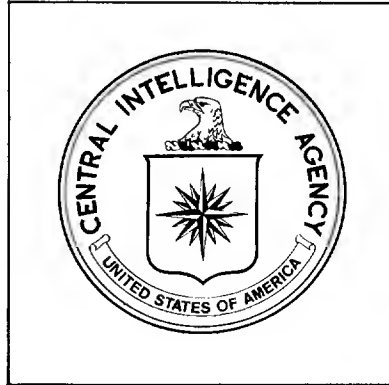


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STAFF NOTES:

**Middle East
Africa
South Asia**

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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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SECRETSyria*Local Communist Leader Criticizes Asad*

Syrian Communist Party chief Khalid Bakdash has recently been highly critical of certain policies of President Asad, both publicly and privately. Writing in the party newspaper, Bakdash criticized a government decision last month to award off-shore prospecting rights to a US oil company. [REDACTED] he has accused Asad of duping the Syrian People's Council into approving the contract.

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More importantly, Bakdash is said to believe that Asad is cooperating too closely now with Egyptian President Sadat in the belief that a peaceful settlement in the Middle East is still possible. The Communist leader denied that Asad's agreement to an extension of the UN forces' mandate on the Golan Heights for a full six months was intended to demonstrate his independence from Egyptian policy. According to Bakdash, who claimed that his judgments were based on discussions with senior Baath Party officials, Asad and Sadat resolved their major differences at their meeting in Riyadh in April.

Asad's decision to extend the mandate was almost certainly based on a mixture of considerations. He has always felt constrained domestically to justify his extension of the UN role because of the lack of progress in negotiations. If he had extended it last month until only the end of July, when the Egyptian mandate runs out, then he would have had to come up with another excuse before the Geneva peace conference reconvenes.

Asad may well have found it convenient, therefore, to play up his differences with Egypt as well as his dispute with the Baathist regime in Iraq to justify accepting a longer renewal. He may also have argued that the six month extension frees Syria to pursue a wider range of options and does not prevent him from resorting to military action at a moment of his choosing.

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Uganda-UK

Amin Threatens to Execute Briton

President Idi Amin announced on June 10 that Denis Hills, a university lecturer and UK citizen, will be executed within ten days unless London meets six conditions. Hills has been accused of seditious activities and tried before a military court because of Amin's displeasure over his manuscript dealing with the role of whites in Uganda.

Amin's demands on London include cessation of "malicious" propaganda about Amin, the ending of alleged efforts by the UK to dissuade other countries from giving aid to Uganda, and the expulsion of Ugandan political exiles from the UK.

The erratic Amin might go ahead with the execution, but it seems more likely that he will pardon Hills at the last minute. Amin is most anxious to have nothing mar the OAU heads-of-state meeting scheduled for Kampala in late July. The execution of Hills might strengthen the hand of those African leaders who would like to hold the meeting somewhere other than Uganda. (SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM)

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